

## They ascended in the south and he arrived at Chevron. (13:22)

From the Torah's use of the singular *va'yavo*, and he came, *Chazal* (*Sotah* 34b) derive that Calev alone left the group, so that he could visit the graves of the Patriarchs to pray that they intercede on his behalf. So great was the ability of the *meraglim* to influence that Calev feared being influenced by them. Yehoshua had no reason to leave, since Moshe *Rabbeinu* had already prayed for him before they had all left the camp. In his *Iyun Yaakov* commentary to the *Talmud*, *Horav Yaakov Reisher*, *zl*, asks why Calev prayed at the graves of the Patriarchs. *Chazal* teach that everything is in the hands of Heaven, except for *yiraas Shomayim*, fear of Heaven, which is in the domain of man. It is up to each and every one of us to endeavor to overcome the harsh influence of the *yetzer hora*, evil inclination. We cannot just pray that he exert no hold over us. We must do our part. A person may petition Heaven for assistance, knowing that he is ill equipped to go it alone. Nonetheless, he must do his own *hishtadlus*, endeavoring, and not rely solely on Heaven.

*Horav Yosef Chaim*, *zl*, *m'Bagdad*, addresses the same question. In his *Ben Yehoyada* commentary, he adds that this question applies equally to Moshe's prayer on behalf of Yehoshua. In other words, how does prayer for Divine assistance in combating the *yetzer hora* achieve efficacy when this battle must be fought and won by the human being without the help of Heavenly intervention? Furthermore, he asks, what is meant by the statement that Calev prayed for Hashem to save him from the *atzas*, counsel, of the *meraglim*. This suggests that Calev was aware of their nefarious intentions to slander the Land and mislead the nation into believing that continuing on to *Eretz Yisrael* was foolhardy. The text does not imply any sin on their part until they returned. If they had already planned their mutiny, then this was not the counsel of the *meraglim*, but rather, the sin of the *meraglim*.

*Rav Yosef Chaim* explains that, when *Chazal* posit that Hashem does not assist a person in his battle with the *yetzer hora*, it means in situations in which the *yetzer hora* attempts to convince a person to commit a clearly-defined major sin. In such a case, the person is acutely aware that he is up against a sin of major proportion. He should neither continue along this path, nor should he circumvent the issue, so that he does not confront the *yetzer hora* in a head-on battle, a fight which he will probably end up losing. Heaven removes itself from the fray in order to enable the person to earn his just reward. He sees the sin; he knows what he must do. If he acts appropriately, his actions will warrant Heavenly reward.

There is, however, another *yetzer hora* which is difficult to battle and emerge triumphant. This is the *yetzer hora* that presents a sin as a *mitzvah*. Under such circumstances, one may turn to Hashem and petition His Divine assistance. We need Divine guidance to deal with the *yetzer hora*, when: a person is unaware that a given endeavor is wrong; when supporting a certain person runs counter to Torah dictate; when an organization that presents itself as holy and Torah-oriented is neither.

When the *meraglim* commenced their mission, they were still considered pious, upright individuals, highly respected leaders of their respective communities. What happened? How did they suddenly fall from such a high perch, *igra rama*, height of spirituality, to *bira amikta*, nadir of depravity? The wily *yetzer hora* convinced them that, if the Jews believed *Eretz Yisrael* to be a good and welcoming land, it would diminish their reward. What is so special about going to a land that has everything? Now, if the land would be miserable, a land that devours its inhabitants – and they are still determined to go – that would present an incredible opportunity for reward. The *yetzer hora* manipulated them, but *Klal Yisrael* was not strong enough to undertake going to a land that would present extreme difficulty for them. Thus, they wept and wept, and they mutinied against Hashem.

Calev understood that their intentions were the work of the *yetzer hora*. It was a strong and convincing *yetzer hora*. Nothing is as difficult to contend with as the *yetzer hora* of *frumkeit*, observance. It presents itself as the *mitzvah* which will save those who support it, when, in reality, it is a destructive sin. Calev left to pray, because he knew quite well that – without Hashem's support – he would have great difficulty overcoming the challenge presented by the other *meraglim*. He dealt with the *atzas*, counsel, of the *meraglim*. They had not sinned – yet, but they had already fallen under the ruse of the holy counsel to save the Jewish People. He prayed and was saved. They did not, and, as a result, we have *Tishah B'Av*, our national day of mourning.